

Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust

Hampstead Garden Suburb Tree Survey

June 2012 – June 2016

1. Introduction

The number, quality and variety of trees on the Suburb are one of its most distinguishing features. Trees add to the beauty of the landscape, they complement the architecture, soften the character of streets and open spaces, bring ecological benefits, provide wildlife habitats, and add greatly to the pleasure of living on the Suburb. In short, they are one of the glories of Hampstead Garden Suburb. They are protected by the provisions of the national tree preservation legislation which relates to Conservation Areas and Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) which are administered by the London Borough of Barnet (Barnet) as the Local Planning Authority. Trees are also protected by the Trust's Scheme of Management. And yet, until now, there has been no comprehensive record of the trees on the Suburb.

In 2012, the Trust therefore proposed, with the support of Barnet and the Suburb Residents Association, to act on the recommendation arising from the 2010 Conservation Area Character Appraisal; that is, 'to undertake detailed tree surveys for the different character areas and to consider the appropriateness of Tree Preservation Orders'. A Steering Group was established and work began in 2012.

2. Objectives and Broader Aims

The objectives of the Tree Survey were to establish by systematic observation, the species, condition and location of trees on the Suburb which:

- are the subject of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs);
- appear on Unwin's 1913 map of the Suburb as trees retained from the field landscape existing before development;
- are neither of the above, but make a significant contribution to the character and landscape of the Suburb, and further;
- are recommended, in certain cases, for consideration for the application of a TPO.

The Survey covers trees in private gardens and on land managed by the Trust and accessible to the public, e.g. allotments, Sunshine Corner and some small greens. *However, volunteers had no access to private property; the Survey only documents trees that can be seen from the street or from public footpaths.* It does not include the Barnet-controlled woodlands and parks, nor does it cover street trees because Barnet maintains a comprehensive database of street trees. The fieldwork extended from June 2012-October 2015.

The broader aims in undertaking this work are to provide information to assist the Trust and Barnet in the work relating to their respective responsibilities for trees in the Suburb; in developing criteria for the retention or removal of trees; and in the longer term planning for the conservation, planting and replanting of trees in the Suburb. As a volunteer project, it also emphasises the need to engage with and consult residents in these matters.

3. Summary of Methodology

The Survey was based on the 16 areas of the Suburb which were used in the Character Appraisal. Digital maps were produced for each area using information from the last publicly available Barnet GIS maps (2012) and Unwin's 1913 version of his plan for the Suburb. Every effort was made to ensure consistency in observation and recording; volunteers normally worked in pairs following agreed guidelines and all queries were noted and checked. Following expert advice, common generic names for trees were used rather than specific names e.g. oak (rather than English oak) or botanical names (*Quercus robur*).

To minimise the unavoidable subjective element in the notion of 'Significant Tree' the following criteria were developed as markers. Where a group of trees clearly make a contribution to the streetscape but are not individually of great quality, they are listed in the spreadsheet as a group

- **Contribution to streetscape.** Is the tree in a prominent position? Does it 'anchor' a view? Complement an architectural feature? Frame an entrance? Is there year round interest?
- **Shape and size.** Is the crown well developed and attractively shaped? How big is it?
- **Relationship to other trees.** Is the tree part of a group which is important to the location?
- **Condition and age.** Does the tree appear in good condition? Is it obviously mature looking at the circumference of the tree?

As the project continued, the boundaries of what had initially been considered to be distinct categories of trees became blurred; for example, trees in hedgerows are sometimes Barnet street trees and sometimes in private ownership; some trees on public greens are entered in the Barnet street tree database and others are not. These anomalies have been dealt with flexibly as seemed most sensible. In every case the details were recorded and explained in the overviews and in the spreadsheet notes.

Finally, a report was produced for each area consisting of three elements: a descriptive overview; a map; and a spreadsheet. The detailed results of the Survey are to be found in these documents. A full description of the Survey methodology is included in Section 6, Further Information.

4. Results: Suburb Overview

Trees in the Suburb at a Glance

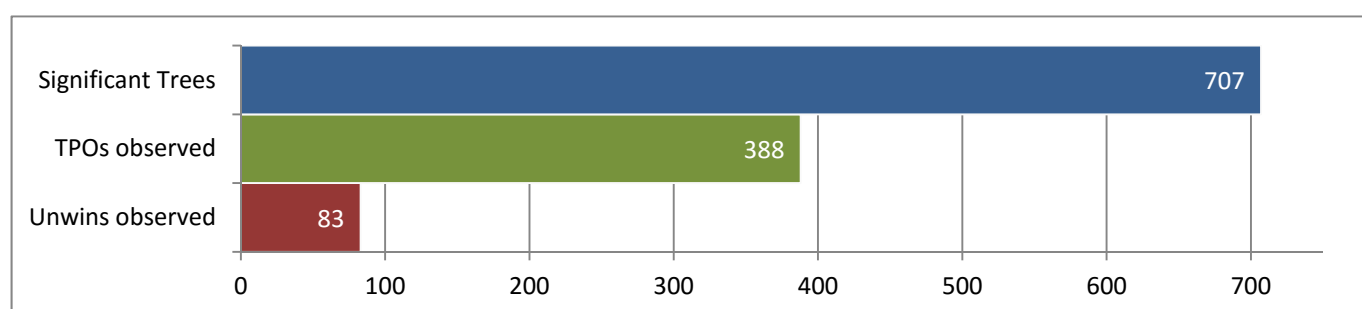


Fig. 1 Individual trees making a significant contribution to the landscape

Individual trees

- 1,156 individual trees make a significant contribution to the landscape; this represents the total of observed TPOs, observed Unwin trees and significant trees *minus* the 22 TPO trees which are also Unwin trees.
- 74 exceptionally fine trees are recommended for consideration for Tree Preservation Orders, of which six are surviving Unwin trees.

Groups of trees

- Separately, there are 251 groups of trees making an impact on the character of the Suburb. The above figure represents the number of distinct groups and *not* the total number of trees within the groups.
- The number of trees in a group can vary from two to 30 plus.

- Often the number of trees in a group will be recorded in the spreadsheets but some groups are extensive, only visible at a distance and no accurate number can be recorded. The figure of 921 in column 7 in Table A represents the best estimate that can be made for groups identified in the Survey.

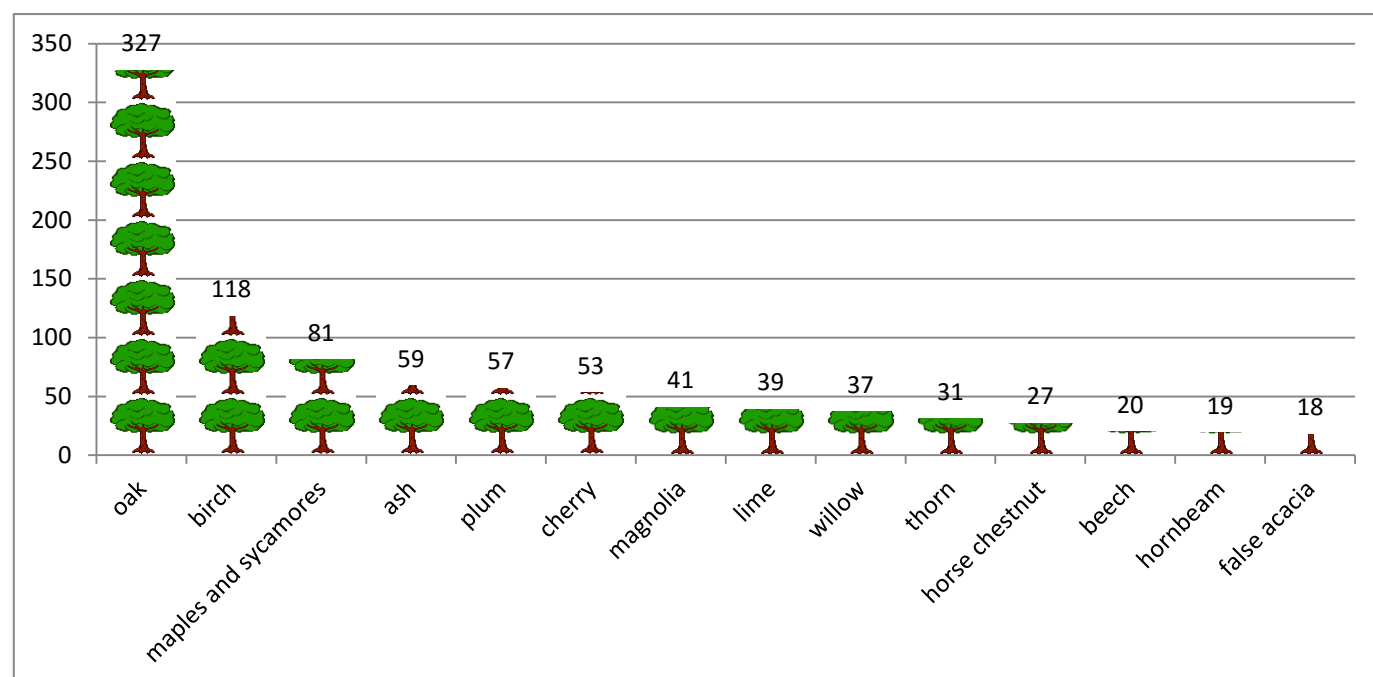


Fig. 2 The 14 most numerous species for individual trees recorded in the Survey
(Unwins, TPOs, and significant trees; trees in groups are not included in this count)

Oaks are by far the largest group of trees recorded. Their longevity, characteristic shape and size allow them to dominate the streetscapes in a way that other trees do not. Ash, birch and maple are fast-growing and groups of these trees constitute barriers between the road and buildings along Falloden Way and Lyttelton Road. Cherry trees and purple leaved plums are most commonly found in front gardens. (The above chart accounts for 927 of the individually recorded trees, or approximately 80%.)

Overall Summary Spreadsheet

The results for the 16 areas and the Suburb totals are shown in Table A. The areas differ greatly in size and character and, as expected, the observations reflect this. Full details are set out in the area reports. All these figures need to be understood in the context of particular areas.

No single total of high quality trees in the Suburb can confidently be presented because of the complicating factor of groups of trees. The two totals are therefore presented separately.

Individual trees (Unwin trees, TPOs and significant trees)	1,156
Number of groups making a significant contribution	251
Estimate of number of trees within groups	921

Table A: Overall Summary Spreadsheet

Areas	1. TPOs (2012)	2. TPOs observed	3. Unwins (1913)	4. Unwins observed	5. Significant Trees	6. Significant Groups	7. No. of trees in Groups	8. TPO Recommend ations
Area 1	15	15	17	13	29	5	76	4
Area 2	29	29	62	40	35	18	99	13
Area 3	13	9	21	8	38	7	19	5
Area 4	93	60	14	3	64	34	94	6
Area 5	70	48	16	12	10	2	11	2
Area 6	27	22	19	6	73	33	90	6
Area 7	39	27	0	0	10	13	45	1
Area 8	83	45	0	0	152	17	50	13
Area 9	0	0	0	0	14	5	54	1
Area 10	4	4	0	0	58	21	72	2
Area 11	21	13	0	0	40	27	94	1
Area 12	11	7	0	0	11	10	32	1
Area 13	38	30	0	0	126	28	86	7
Area 14	74	55	0	0	7	8	23	1
Area 15	36	24	0	0	35	22	65	11
Area 16	0	0	1	1	5	1	11	0
Total	553	388	150 ¹	83	707 ²	251 ³	921	74

¹ Includes 22 trees covered by TPOs

² Number of individual trees meeting criteria for ‘significant contribution’

³ Number of groups, not number of trees within groups

Trees safeguarded by Tree Preservation Orders

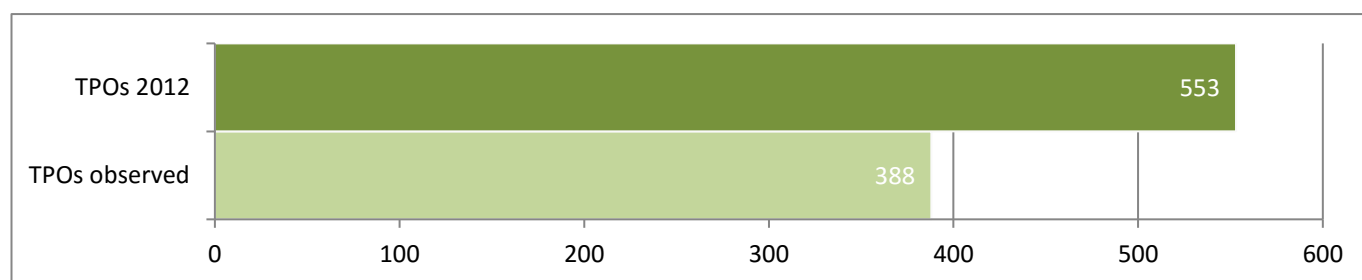


Fig. 3 Observed TPOs compared to base information from GIS map (2012)

The 2012 base information from Barnet showed 553 TPOs. 70% of the individual TPO trees survive, i.e., 388 out of 553 TPOs. There are substantial differences between areas, with more TPOs being listed and surviving in the southern areas of the Suburb. 100% of the 29 TPO listed trees in Area 2 survive. In Area 6 where 27 TPOs are also listed, 22 were observed, giving one of the highest percentages of surviving TPOs (81%). In contrast, Areas 4 and 8, which have the highest number of base information TPOs, also have the lowest percentages of surviving TPOs, 64% and 54% respectively. All four TPO groups were observed and the details recorded in the area spreadsheets.

As well as individually, trees in Tree Preservation Orders can also be designated as Groups – which identify the number and species in the first schedule of the Order; also as Areas and Woodlands where the protected trees are not specified individually but by reference to mapped boundaries. The protocols we have followed where trees are **not** individually designated in a TPO are fully described in Section 7.2. In general, the details relating to particular trees will be found in the spreadsheet notes. However, it is important to note that this Survey cannot provide a definitive guide of the TPO status of particular trees - this information is available to residents on application to Barnet.

Unwin Trees

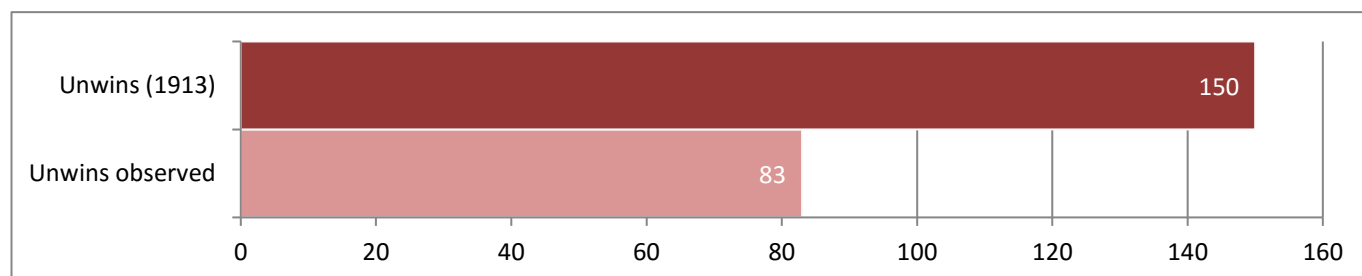


Fig. 4 Observed Unwins compared to base information (2012)

Unwin's 1913 layout map only covers the oldest parts of the Suburb, namely Areas 1-6, and 16. It shows 150 trees retained from the field landscape and remarkably, after 100 years, 83 (55%) appear to have survived. 77 (97%) of these are oaks. Where the trees are oak or other long-lived species, we can be certain that they are Unwin trees. Where the species observed have shorter life spans, for example birch or maple, there may be some doubt. The Unwin oaks tend to be found in allotments, backlands and public open spaces where light levels are higher and competition from other trees is less, and in many cases the built environment was designed around the retention of these trees.

Area 2, the Artisans' Quarter, has the largest number of surviving Unwin trees, 40 out of an original 62. The traces of old field boundaries can easily be seen here in the lines of oaks; there are also examples in Area 1 Central Square and in Area 5 in Rotherwick Road. In Area 5, 12 (75%) of the 16 original Unwin trees can still be observed. There are, of course, trees of equivalent age in the newer parts of the Suburb, which are not included on the 1913 map. For example, in Area 13 a line of oaks in the rear gardens of Holne Chase appear to follow an old field boundary. In Area 7 a line of

magnificent oaks runs along the rear gardens of Wildwood Road following an old Saxon boundary which survived as the C20th boundary between Finchley and Hendon.

Interestingly, only 22 out of 83 Unwin Trees are safeguarded by a TPO. Some of the trees are very old and not in the best condition, others have had branches removed resulting in a poor shape but most are flourishing. Six are recommended for TPO consideration in this Survey.

Trees making a significant contribution to the Suburb landscape

707 trees met the criteria for trees making a significant contribution to the character and landscape. As the Survey progressed the location specific nature of the concept of 'significant tree' became ever more apparent. The extreme example is the A1 Falloden Way in Area 6 where heavy traffic on a narrow road results in a noisy, polluted environment; here any tree of reasonable quality makes a significant impact. Conversely, in Area 7 - Wildwood Road - where mature forest trees dominate, the bar for a tree making a 'significant' contribution is very high. Closes such as the Holms and Neale Close present a different context with small houses set in an intimate space. Here small ornamental trees are common and add much to the character of the streets because they complement the architecture in style and scale. In areas developed after the First World War, the roads tend to be wider, the houses larger, fewer existing trees were retained, and more front gardens are paved over. Although the ambiance is generally peaceful, individual trees have a much greater significance in 'greening' and softening streets that would otherwise have a raw suburban feel. This contributes to the greater number of trees recorded as significant in Areas 8, 10, 11 and 13. The Area Reports deal with these issues in detail.

Groups of trees making a significant contribution to the Suburb landscape

The 251 groups of trees vary a great deal. In most cases they are relatively small clusters of 2-5 trees where not every tree is not of exceptional quality, but where together they make a significant impact. For example, at the head of a close, marking street corners or entrances, or softening otherwise bare streets. Other groups contain mature, forest trees and are major features of the landscape but in these cases, usually their exact location cannot be ascertained from the street. For example, the mature trees on the boundary between Ludlow Way and Marylebone Cemetery, whatever their precise location, are a key feature in a streetscape which has few other trees.

Recommendations for consideration for TPO orders

Six Unwin trees and 68 significant trees are recommended for consideration for TPO orders making a total of 74 recommendations. Mindful of the consequences of the granting of a TPO, the criteria have been strictly applied. The largest numbers of recommendations are in Areas 2 and 8. In all cases they are trees of extraordinary quality. In some cases, the trees recommended already have the added protection of being on Barnet or Trust land but it was nonetheless felt important to document their quality in this way. Examples of TPO recommendations made in this survey include: a mature oak to the rear of 15/17 Hutchings Walk; the huge oak in the allotments behind 11 Asmunds Hill; the three tulip trees at the junction of Willifield Way and Hampstead Way which complement Unwin's layout, providing a focal point which closes the approach view.

Nothing in this document restricts in any way the statutory functions of the London Borough of Barnet.

5. Conclusions

Objectives and information to assist in the day to day management of trees

The objectives of the Survey have been met. The Suburb Overview of Results, together with the 16 Area Reports describe the species, condition and location of trees in three categories

- trees which are the subject of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs);
- trees on Unwin's 1913 map of the Suburb as trees retained from the field landscape;
- trees which are neither of the above, but make a significant contribution to the character and landscape of the Suburb;

74 trees are recommended for consideration for the application of a TPO.

The results are encouraging. Currently large numbers of high quality trees contribute to the Suburb environment, and the survival rate of 55% of the Unwin trees was unexpectedly high. The 54 TPO queries record some anomalies where an observed tree is not of the expected species or quality associated with a TPO. We are not able to say a lot about the condition of trees because we had no access to private property to get close; however, we did note a lot of poor quality pruning greatly diminishing the quality of the trees. All the horse chestnuts that we could observe up close had leaf miner but we did not see any sign of ash dieback disease.

This is a volunteer survey, undertaken between 2012 and 2015, with limited resources. Inevitably, over four years, observations will be overtaken by events. Some trees will have been damaged by storms, or felled with permission or without permission. This may affect the overall numbers of trees recorded. The constraints on volunteer access will have had some effect on the recording of species and location. These caveats are real, but they do not affect the significance of the overall Survey results. We are confident that the systematic approach of the Survey and the level of detail generated will provide information that will assist the Trust and Barnet in their work relating to their respective responsibilities for trees in the Suburb.

The strength of the Survey results lies in its focus on the contribution of trees to particular streetscapes, and to the ways in which trees relate to the architecture and to other trees. It is for this reason that we are also confident that the results provide ample evidence for the conclusions relating to longer term planning set out below.

Issues to be considered in developing policies for the future conservation and replanting of trees

The focus on surviving trees on the 1913 Unwin map is not for sentimental, backward looking reasons. It is because Unwin's integration of features from the pre-existing landscape into the planning of a large-scale urban development was so revolutionary and so influential. His principles are well documented elsewhere but the 1913 map demonstrates the role of trees in his scheme. He eschewed a grid system in favour of roads following contours, curving around ancient woodlands, in some cases following existing tree lined lanes and paths and opening up views of woodland from gardens. It shows the deliberate retention of mature trees and the planning of roads to maximise their aesthetic effect.

The importance of trees in complementing Unwin's planning concepts

So the first issue to be highlighted is the importance of trees in Unwin's approach to urban planning. Wherever possible, trees are used to convey a distinctive sense of place, to create and to highlight attractive features of the landscape and buildings. The Survey records how trees act as focal points in a landscape; how they mark entrances to closes; how streets were planned so that trees in backlands soar over roofs and provide green views between houses and over garages. The Survey

also notes how trees often shade twittens and the smaller lanes; how trees on small greens provide shade and interest on through routes and, above all, how individual trees can cumulatively contribute to the ambience of a street. The contribution that a tree makes to the character of the locale has to be the starting point in decision making.

The scale and nature of trees in relation to architecture and street character

The second issue is the importance of the scale and shape of trees in relation to individual houses and nearby architecture. The Area Reports provide numerous examples of trees which exactly complement the houses nearby, fruit trees in cottage gardens, formal symmetrical planting on carriage drives, focal features, often huge weeping willows, in courtyards and on greens (Meadway Court, Edmunds Walk).

This issue becomes ever more significant as time passes. Firstly, as the landscape has matured, the relationship between the scale of trees in relation to the architecture has altered. In some cases, large maturing trees now dwarf cottages – these may have developed from self-seeded saplings or from inappropriate choice at time of planting. Secondly, social expectations change particularly in relation to the desirability of off street parking which, in some places, has led to the removal of trees in front gardens and the paving over of gardens. This is exacerbated in some cases by insurers' requirements that tree growth is controlled. In removing or reducing the role of trees, such trends threaten the harmony of trees, green areas and buildings that is so characteristic of the Suburb.

The care and selection of trees

Thirdly, it follows that where trees are neglected or trees inappropriate for a particular setting are planted, this can detract from the ambience of a street. Barnet and the Trust have comparatively little scope to influence planting; it is, rightly, usually a matter for residents. Just as the Design Guidance assists residents in relation to buildings, so there is a need for user-friendly guidance in relation to trees underlining the message of right tree, right place.

Replanting and improving the quality of the tree stock

Fourthly, many trees in the Suburb are old and nearing the end of their life span, while others are overgrown, or crowded by self-seeded young trees. Currently replanting is done on a one by one basis sometimes with, and sometimes without advice from the Trust, but always without the benefit of any long term planning to enhance the Suburb. Replanting for the future should be a current concern. It is very important to encourage residents and officers to look at trees in context and as a group, so that individual planting contributes to the overall ambience. One of the aims of this Survey has been to help to identify that ambience.

An integrated tree infrastructure

Finally, an obvious but often overlooked point. The majority of trees that have an impact on the ambience of the Suburb are not within the Trust's Scheme of Management. The abundant street trees, parks (for example Northway Gardens and the Mutton Brook Recreation area), the greens, woods, the boundary trees in Marylebone Cemetery, Golders Green Crematorium, on the Hampstead Golf Club land, and crucially, the Heath Extension, are all outside the Trust's Scheme of Management. The trees in private gardens and on Trust managed land are but one element in an integrated 'infrastructure' of trees that benefits the Suburb. Conserving this structure requires all the bodies involved to nurture good relationships and liaise, where appropriate, in future planning. The agreement between the Residents Association and Barnet for the replanting of street trees is a good example of this, as is the Tree Survey itself.